

# Shakespeare in Buttonwood takes audiences to Scotland on August 18 & 19 with MACBETH

Shakespeare in Buttonwood, New Bedford's free Shakespeare event, returns for a three-performance run of the classic tragedy, Macbeth, in Buttonwood Park. The tale of what happens when misguided ambition gets swept up in matters of fate marks the program's second year, preceding the inaugural dystopian Romeo & Juliet. This year's production also marks the second year of collaboration between the City of New Bedford, New Bedford Free Public Library, New Bedford Department of Parks, Recreation, & Beaches, and local fringe theatre company, The Glass Horse Project.

"Last year, we opened with a unique vision of what Romeo & Juliet looked like to us as a company. This year, at least aesthetically, feels more like what a traditional production of this piece would be. However, we are still putting our own spin on the show." Korey Pimental, Artistic Director of Glass Horse Project, shares.

Continuing Shakespeare in Buttonwood with another tragedy was purely logistical, Pimental commented, mentioning that Shakespeare's tragedies are the ones most frequently read in schools and the texts the general population seems to remember best. He adds, "I think why the tragedies are so well-known, both as great pieces of literature and great pieces of drama, is because they start off with a larger than life problem or anxiety that no one can figure out how to resolve and by the end, everyone has learned a lesson. It shows how mutable and possible of change humanity really is." Macbeth tells the story of a Scottish general and his quest for absolute power

after a prophecy predicts his reign as king. Director Alyssa Steen, who played scene-stealing Mercutio in last year's *Romeo & Juliet*, adds "Macbeth is one of the greatest tragedies ever written and performed. It shows a darker truth to human nature; despite magic, or outside influence, the choice to act is ultimately up to the individual."

This year's production keeps the story in its original setting, opting to instead play up the fantastical and grittier elements of the Bard's famous tragedy. Audience members can expect to see kilts and more traditional weaponry in the fight choreography, a staunch contrast from the unique weapons last year's fights called for. Garrett Olson, Glass Horse's resident fight choreographer and fight and safety director adds, "I am thrilled and proud of the hard work our actors have done to create these very exciting and believable fights."

The cast has been hard at work since the end of May, rehearsing every Saturday at the New Bedford Free Public Library—two hours in the morning for those involved in stage combat and an additional four hours to rehearse the show itself. Leeandra Booth, who makes her Shakespeare in Buttonwood debut with *Macbeth* as both the gentlewoman and Third Witch acknowledges the level of commitment the cast has by chiming in, "we are a group of hardworking individuals."

The cast itself is made up of twelve total actors, with a large majority of the company taking on more than one role, as was common practice in Shakespeare's time. The acting company of *Macbeth* spans a wide range in both age and experience. Some members of the company are trying Shakespeare for the first time, while others in the company have been acting for decades, both in community and professional settings. Ashley Cowles, a rising high school junior making her Shakespeare in Buttonwood debut as both First Witch and Fleance, notes "As a younger actor, I found it incredibly enriching to be around older, more seasoned actors that had been performing for

upward of twenty or thirty years. Everyone was ready and willing to give advice or share their stories.”

Shakespeare in Buttonwood’s Macbeth will run for three performances: Saturday, August 18 at 1 PM & 5 PM and Sunday, August 19 at 1 PM. The show will take place at the Buttonwood Park baseball diamond, behind the Lawler Library. Audience members are encouraged to bring a blanket or a lawn chair as seating will not be provided. For more information, visit The Glass Horse Project or Shakespeare in Buttonwood presents Macbeth on Facebook. This program is supported in part by a grant from the New Bedford, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, & Westport cultural councils, local agencies which are supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.